Strawberry Shortcake

Strawberry Shortcake's Seaberry Mystery

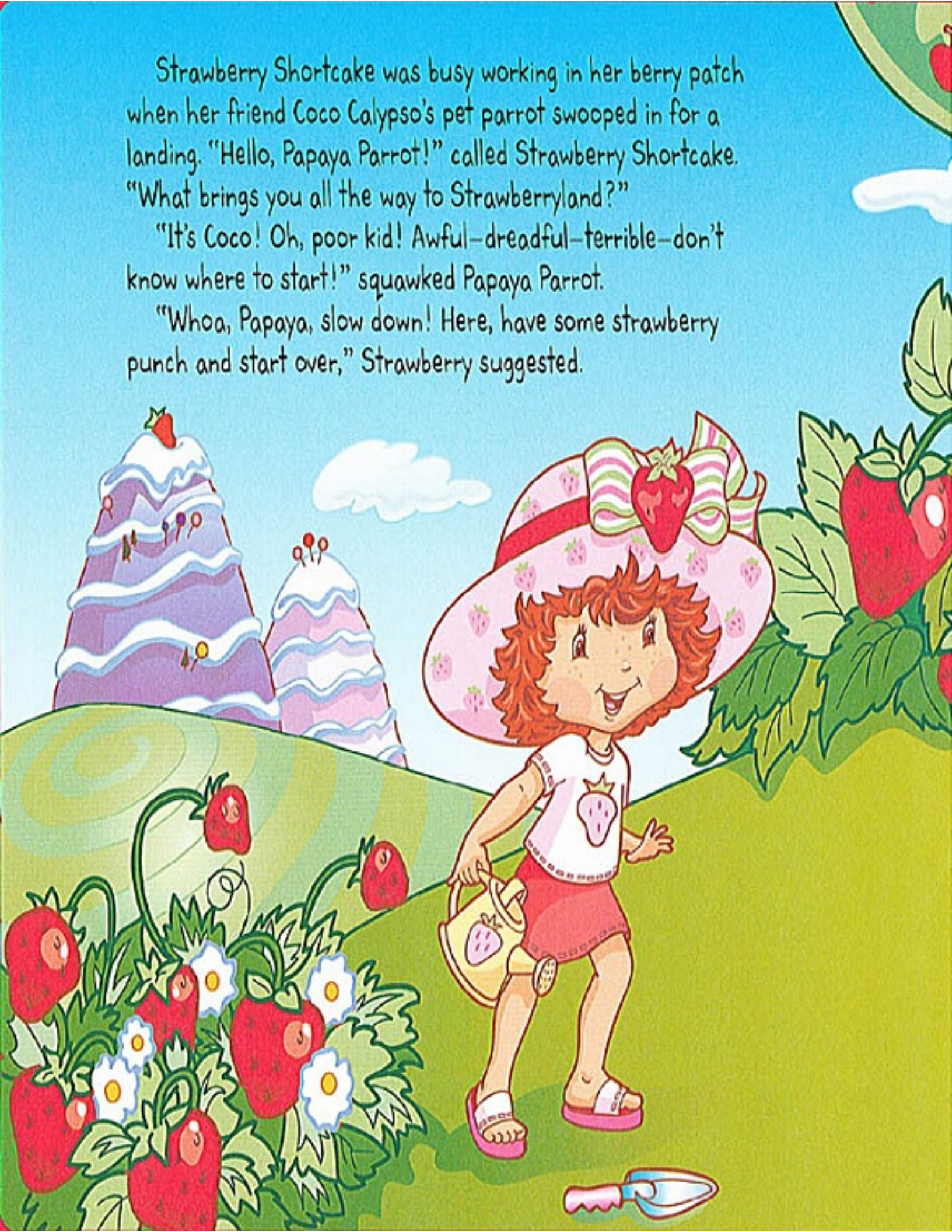
By Sonia Sander

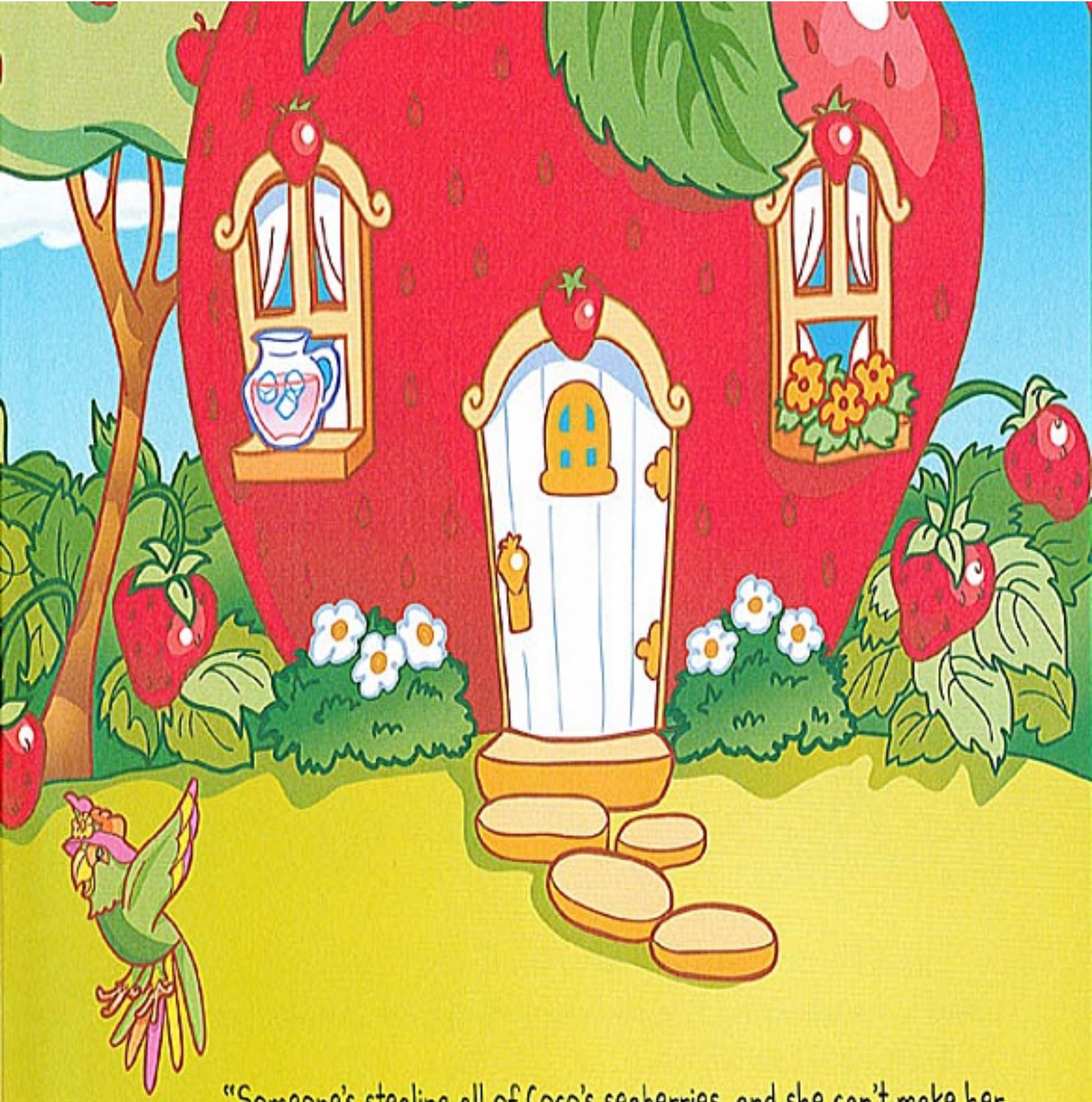
Illustrated by Josie Yee and Jim Durk

Strawberry Shortcake was busy working in her berry patch when her friend Coco Calypso's pet parrot swooped in for a landing. "Hello, Papaya Parrot!" called Strawberry Shortcake. "What brings you all the way to Strawberryland?"

"It's Coco! Oh, poor kid! Awful–dreadful–terrible–don't know where to start!" squawked Papaya Parrot.

"Whoa, Papaya, slow down! Here, have some strawberry punch and start over," Strawberry suggested.





"Someone's stealing all of Coco's seaberries, and she can't make her world-famous seaberry treats! We don't know why or who or when or how, but we need your help, Strawberry!" pleaded Papaya Parrot.

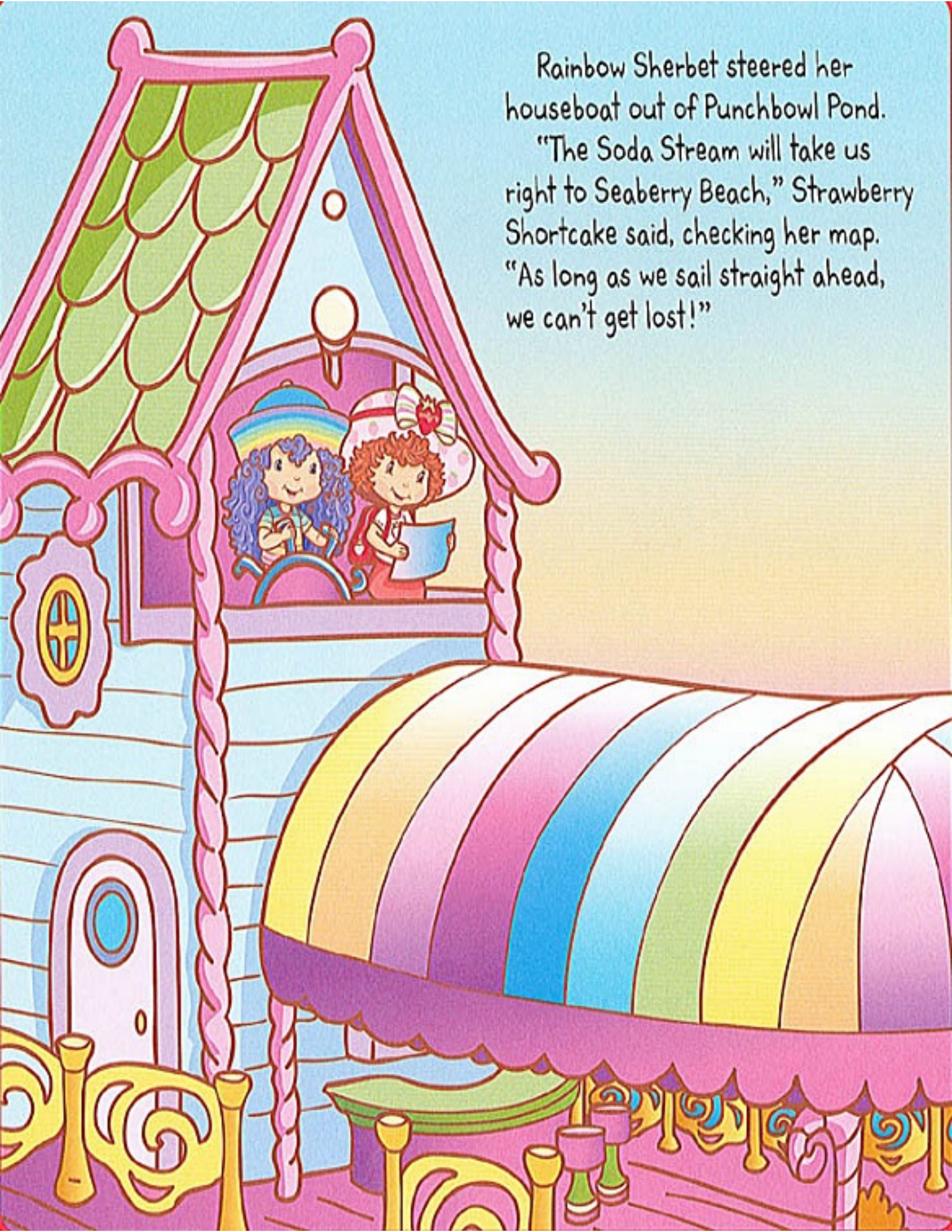
"Of course I'll help!" said Strawberry Shortcake. "Let's go! Seaberry Beach is berry far away, but I know a friend who can help us get there in no time."

Strawberry Shortcake and Papaya Parrot went to Punchbowl Pond to see their friend Rainbow Sherbet. Blueberry Muffin was visiting Rainbow Sherbet, too.

"Coco Calypso needs help? Count me in, matey! The good ship Rainbow Float is at your service," offered Rainbow Sherbet.

"I love a good mystery," added Blueberry Muffin. "Can I come, too?"

"Sure," said Strawberry Shortcake. "We'll need all the help we can get to solve this mystery."



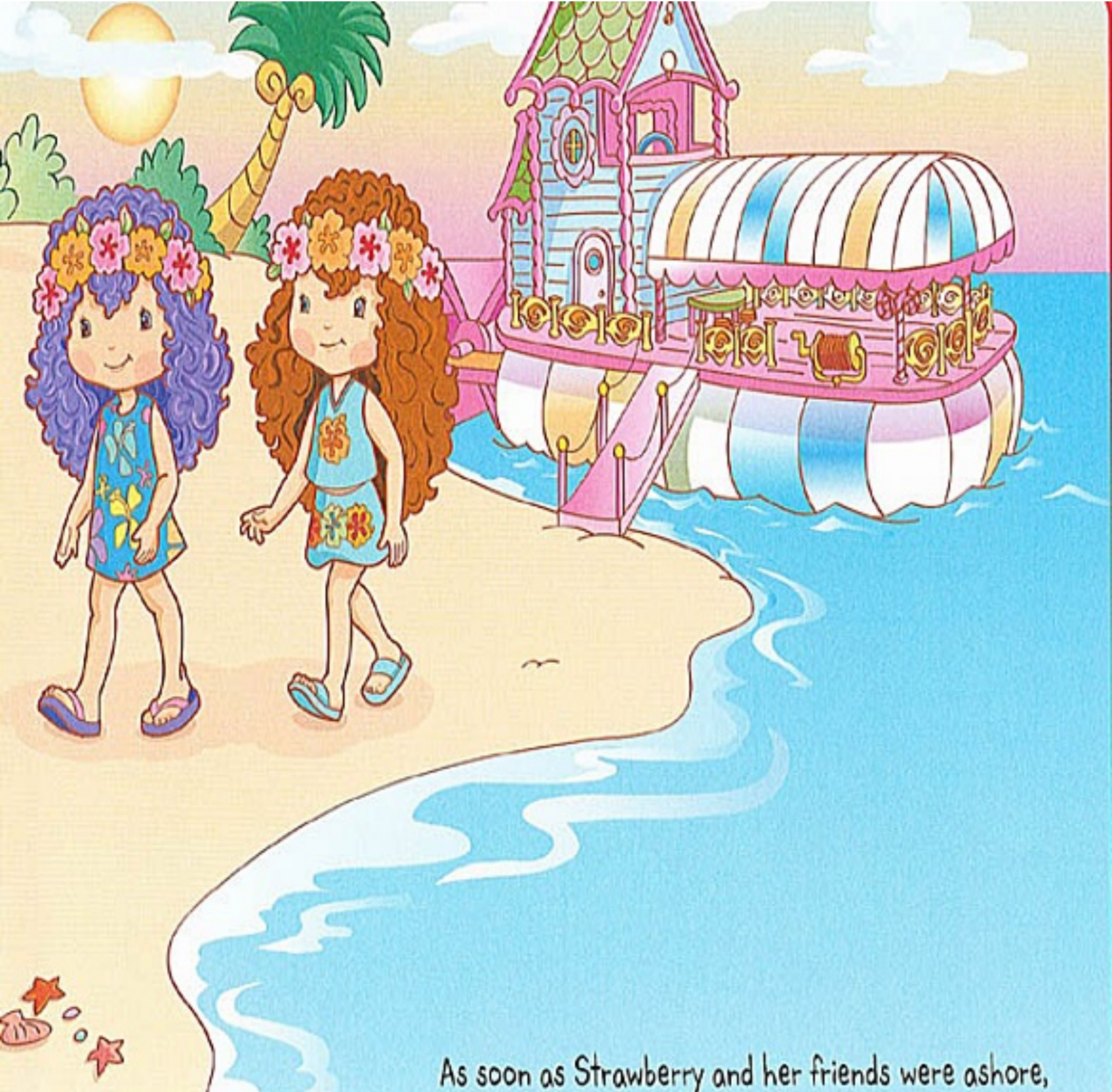
Rainbow Sherbet steered her houseboat out of Punchbowl Pond.

"The Soda Stream will take us right to Seaberry Beach," Strawberry Shortcake said, checking her map. "As long as we sail straight ahead, we can't get lost!"

With Strawberry's directions and Rainbow's steering, the three friends reached Seaberry Beach in a few hours. They changed into their summer clothes and set off for shore.

"We're here! We're home! We're home sweet home!" Papaya Parrot squawked happily.

"Hello, everybody!" called Coco Calypso from shore. "Welcome to Seaberry Beach!"



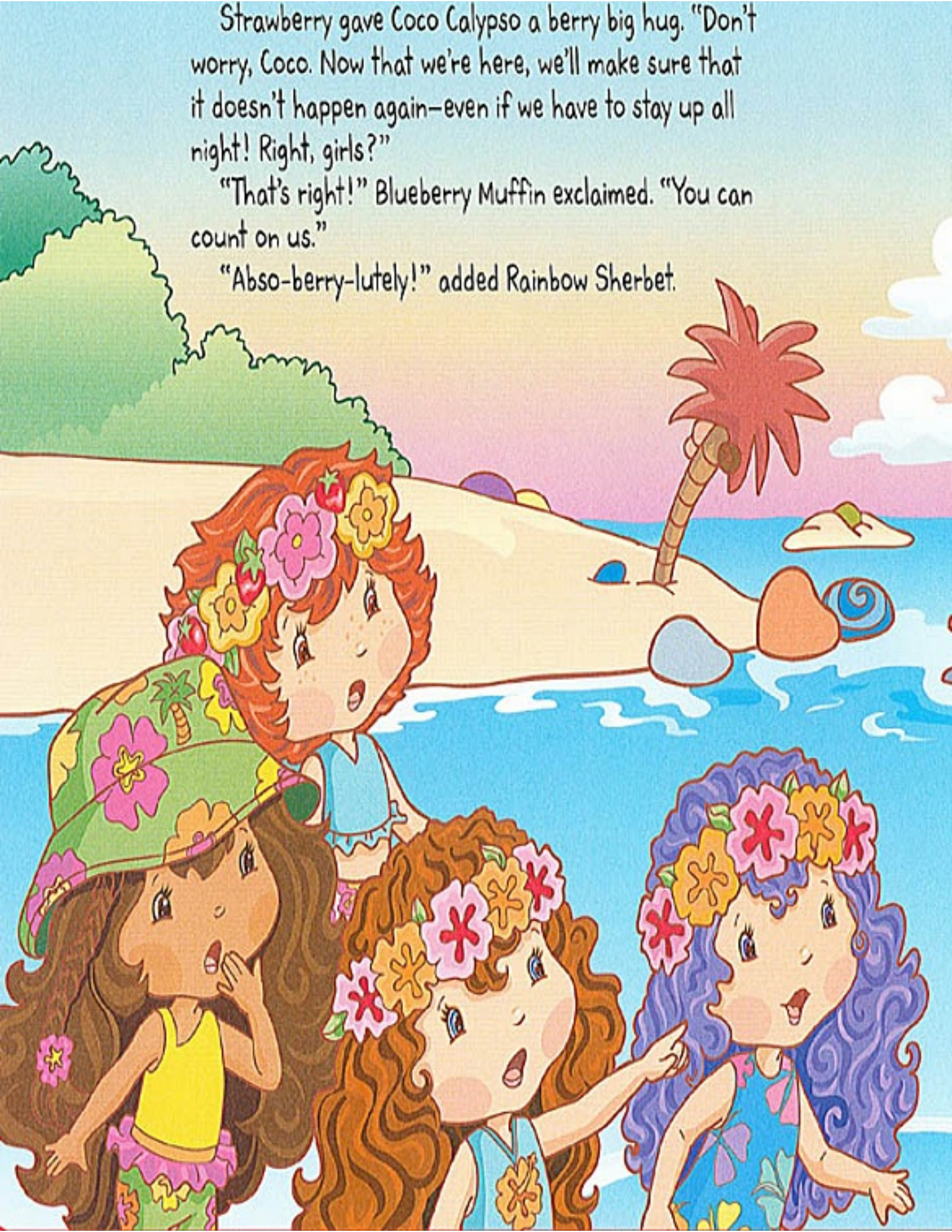
As soon as Strawberry and her friends were ashore, Coco told them about the stolen seaberries.

"It all started a few weeks ago. I gathered seaberries and left them on the beach, like I do every day. But the next morning, the seaberries were gone! All that was left was a trail of them leading into the lagoon. Now this happens every single night!"

Strawberry gave Coco Calypso a berry big hug. "Don't worry, Coco. Now that we're here, we'll make sure that it doesn't happen again—even if we have to stay up all night! Right, girls?"

"That's right!" Blueberry Muffin exclaimed. "You can count on us."

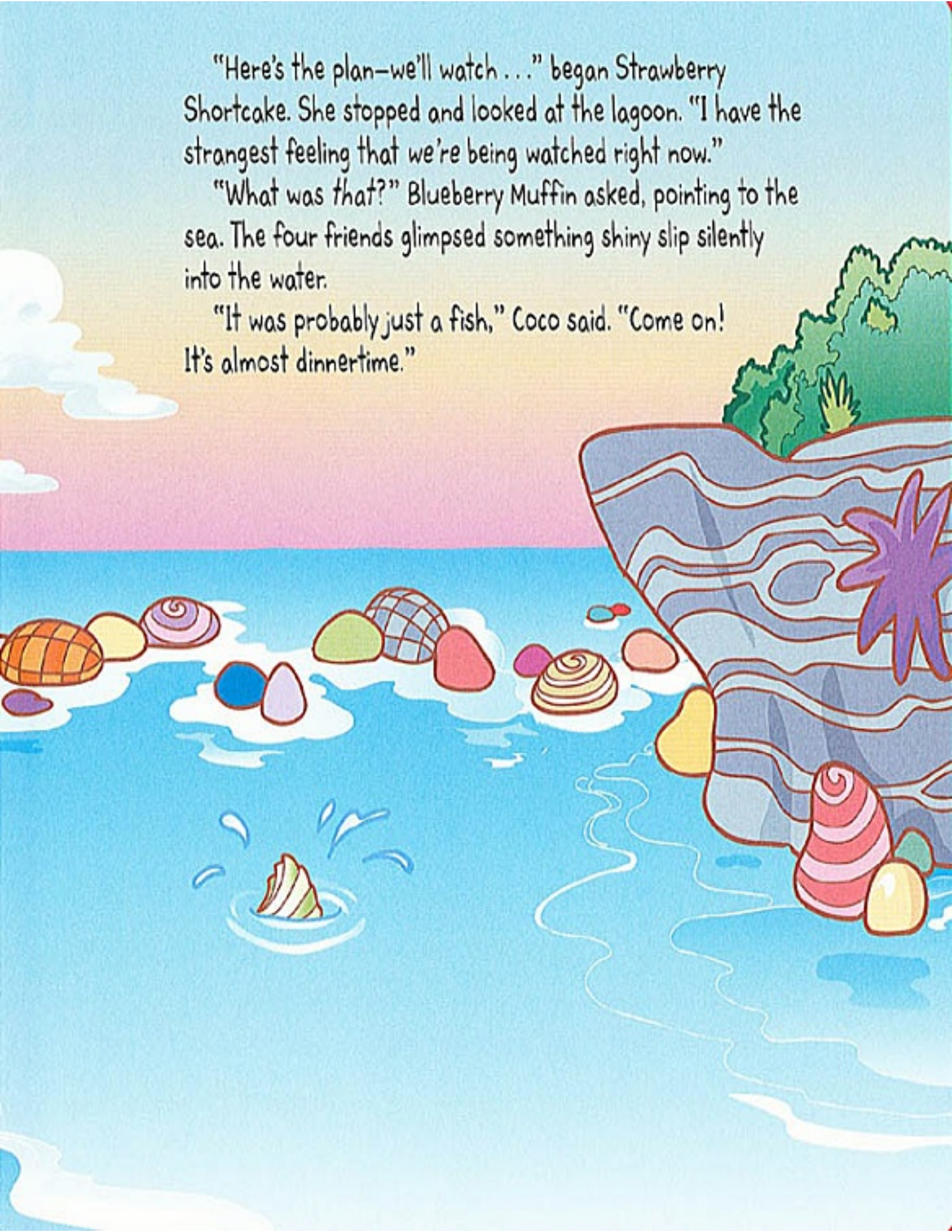
"Abso-berry-lutely!" added Rainbow Sherbet.

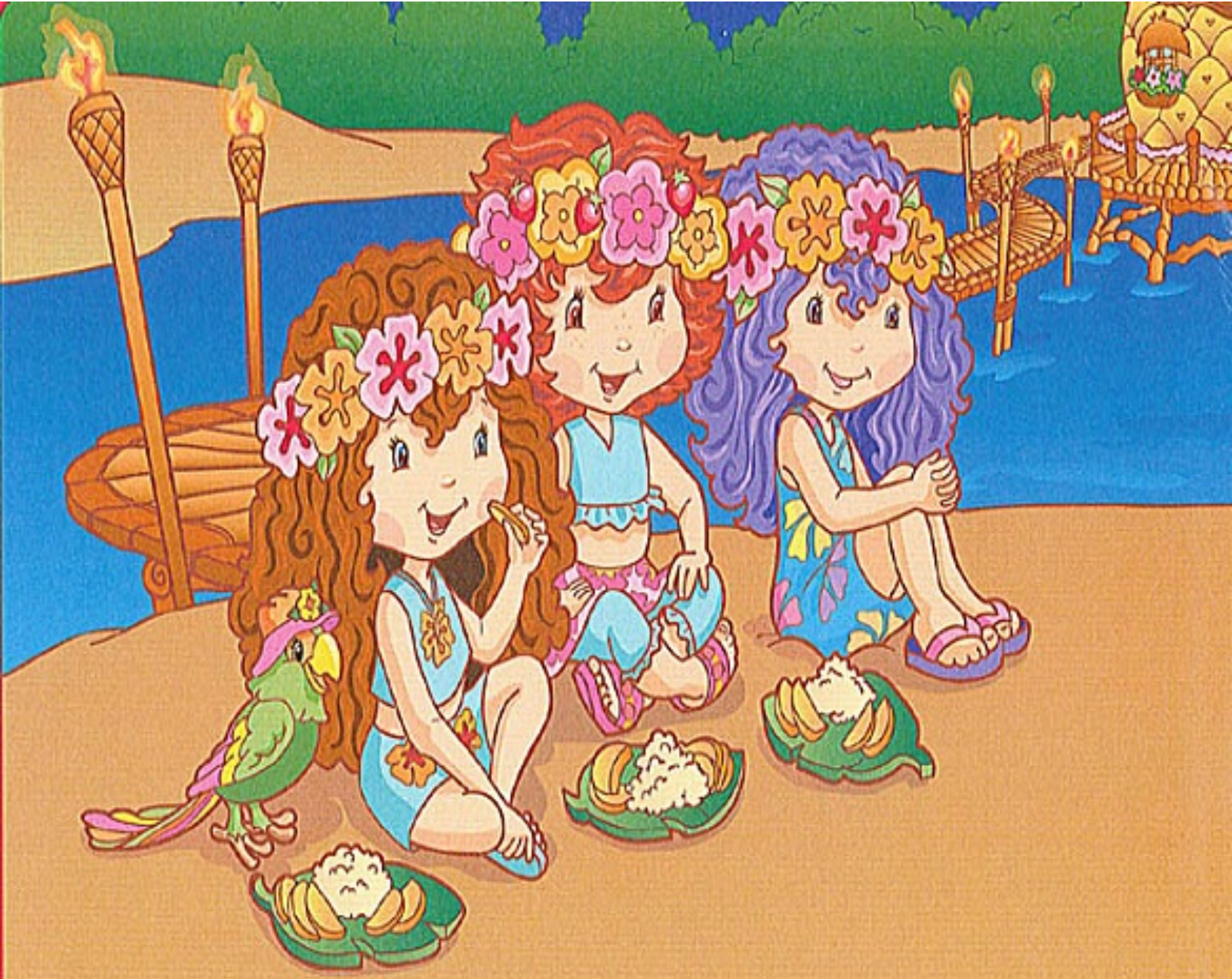


"Here's the plan—we'll watch . . ." began Strawberry Shortcake. She stopped and looked at the lagoon. "I have the strangest feeling that we're being watched right now."

"What was *that*?" Blueberry Muffin asked, pointing to the sea. The four friends glimpsed something shiny slip silently into the water.

"It was probably just a fish," Coco said. "Come on! It's almost dinnertime."





For their first night on the island, Coco Calypso prepared a special tropical dinner.

"Mmm, this is delicious, Coco," said Strawberry Shortcake. "Aren't you going to join us?"

"Not yet—I have one more surprise," said Coco Calypso, stepping over to a set of steel drums and picking up a guitar. "Hit it, guys!"

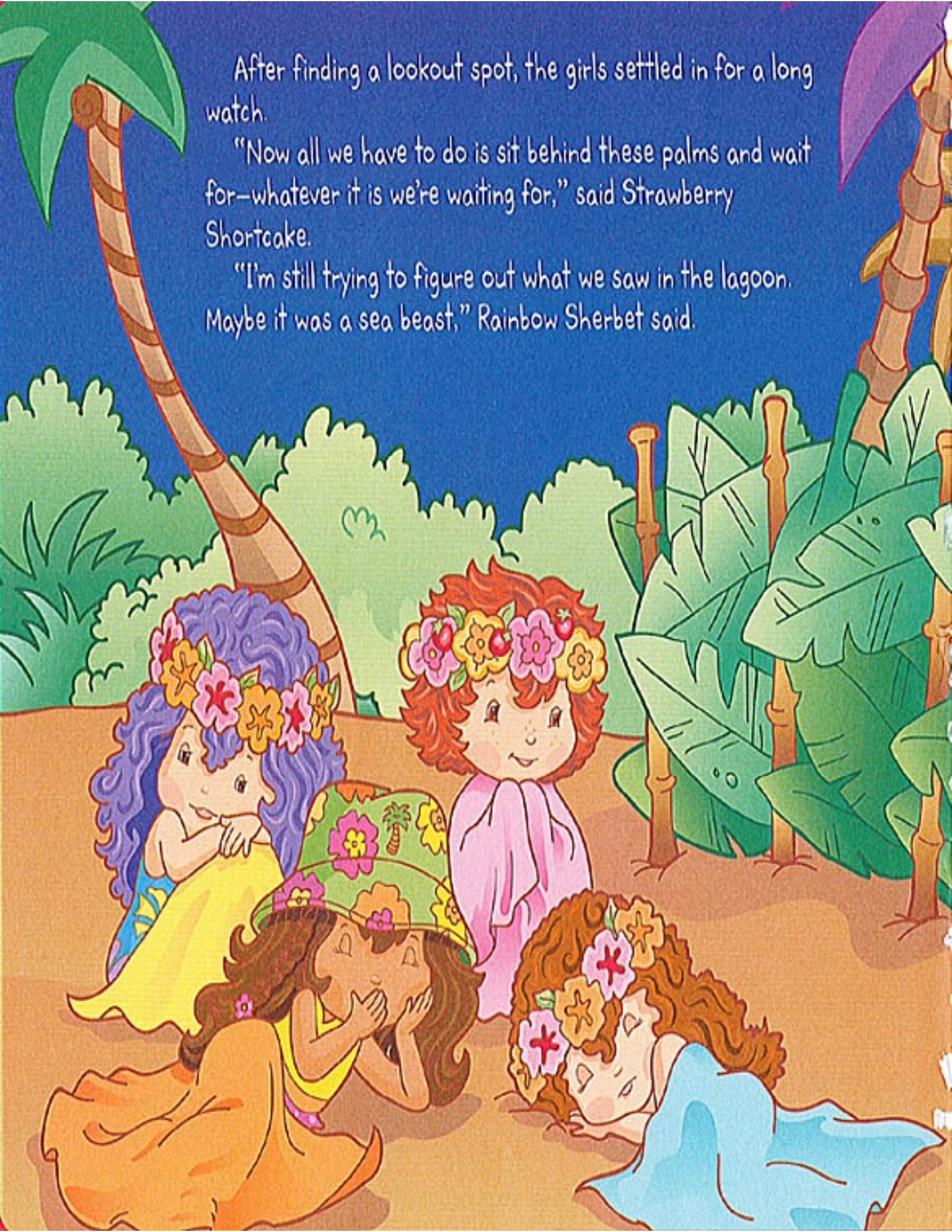
Suddenly, three monkeys swung out of the jungle and began to play a tropical island song!

"That was wonderful!" cried Strawberry Shortcake as Coco's song ended. "It must be berry fun to have this whole beautiful beach to yourself!"

"Oh, yeah, you bet," said Coco Calypso—but she didn't sound very convincing.

"Strawberry," whispered Blueberry Muffin. "Do you think Coco seems kind of, well, lonely?"

"I was thinking the same thing," Strawberry agreed. "Maybe that's something else we can help Coco with."



After finding a lookout spot, the girls settled in for a long watch.

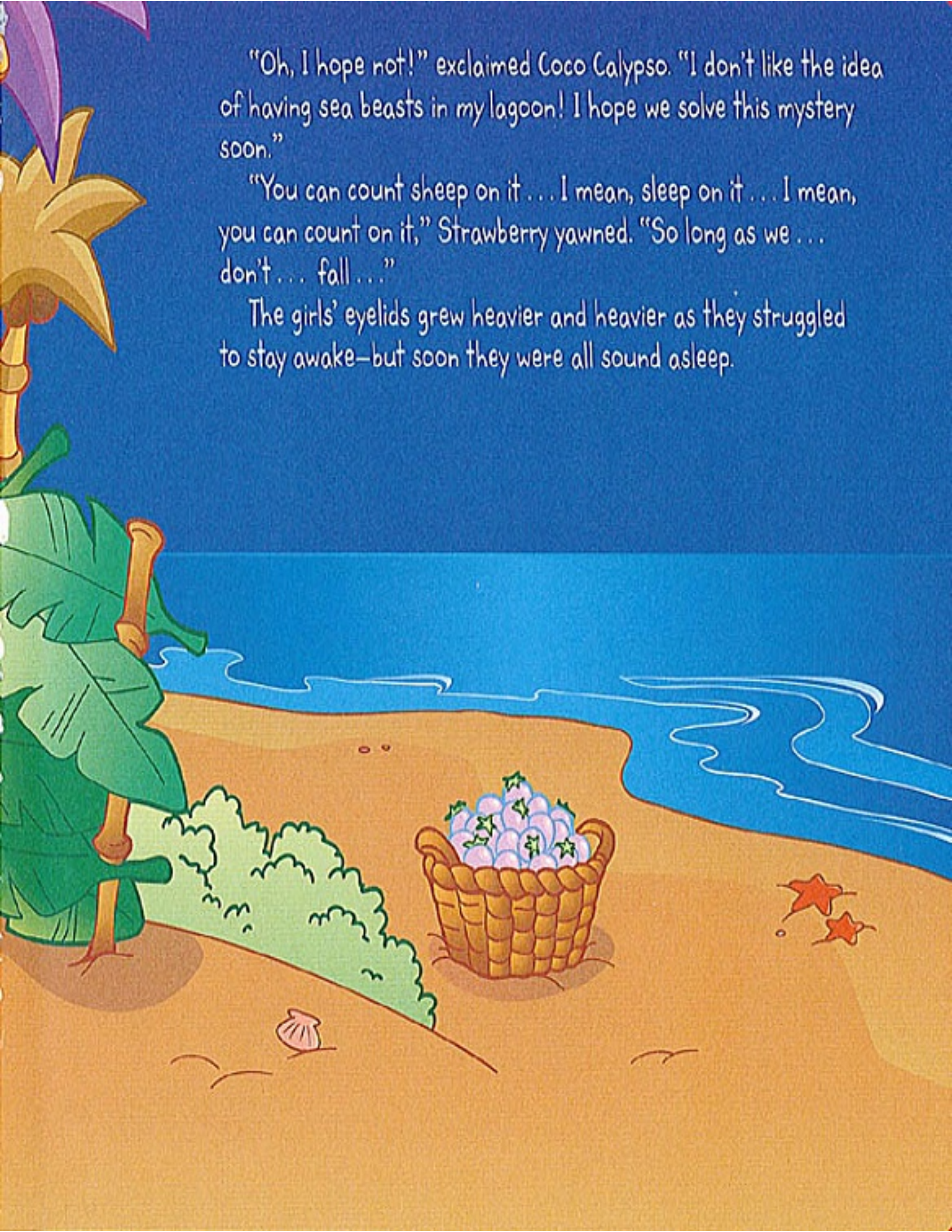
"Now all we have to do is sit behind these palms and wait for—whatever it is we're waiting for," said Strawberry Shortcake.

"I'm still trying to figure out what we saw in the lagoon. Maybe it was a sea beast," Rainbow Sherbet said.

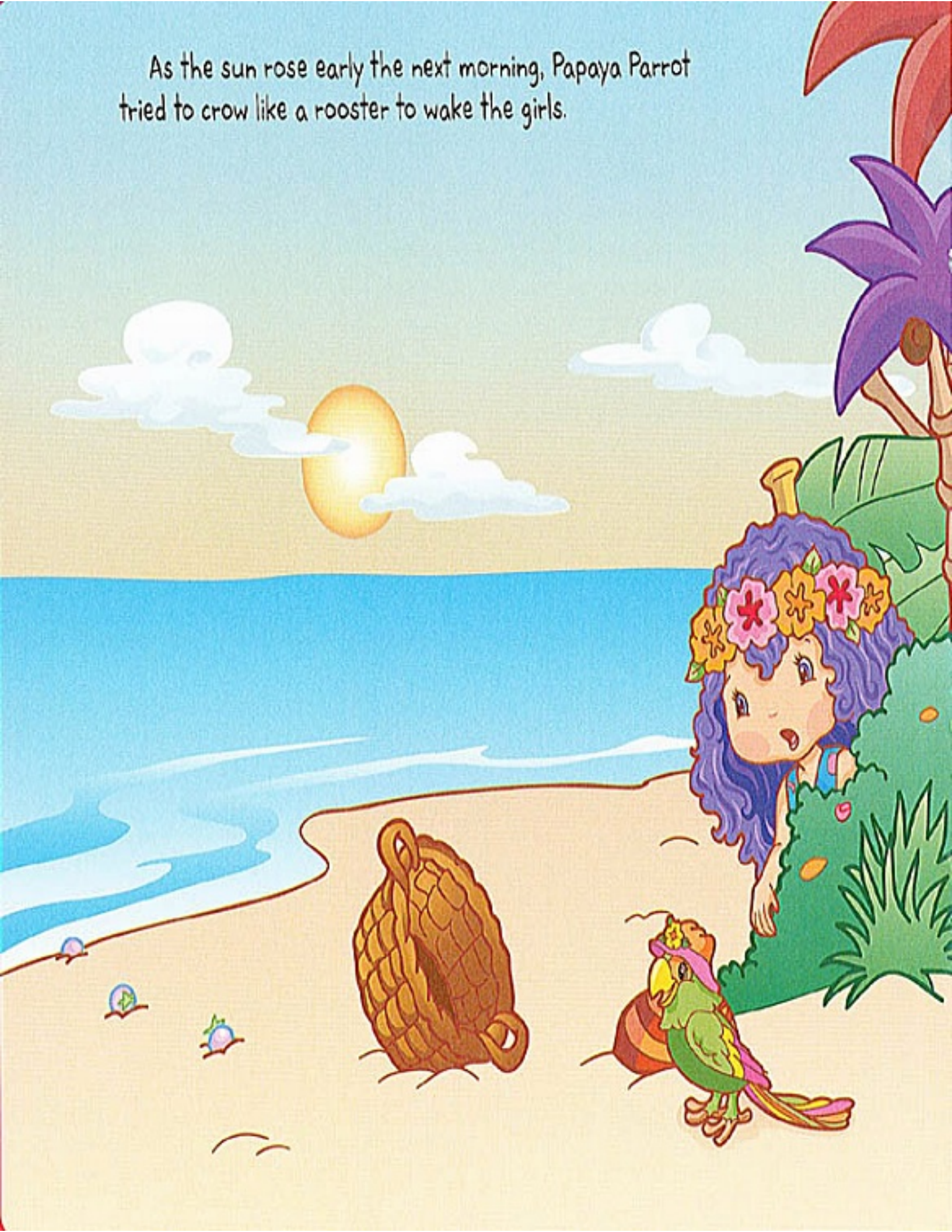
"Oh, I hope not!" exclaimed Coco Calypso. "I don't like the idea of having sea beasts in my lagoon! I hope we solve this mystery soon."

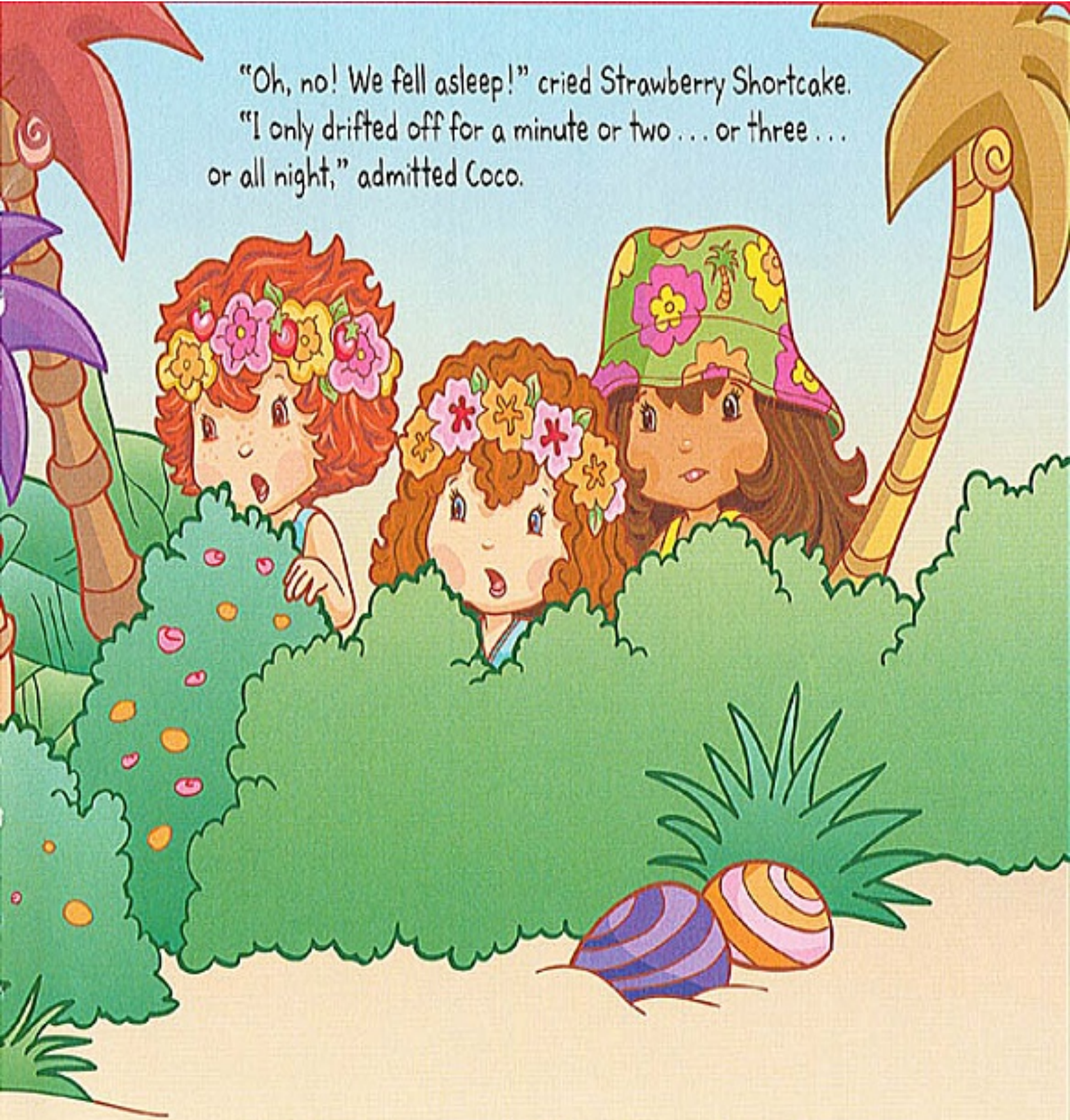
"You can count sheep on it . . . I mean, sleep on it . . . I mean, you can count on it," Strawberry yawned. "So long as we . . . don't . . . fall . . ."

The girls' eyelids grew heavier and heavier as they struggled to stay awake—but soon they were all sound asleep.



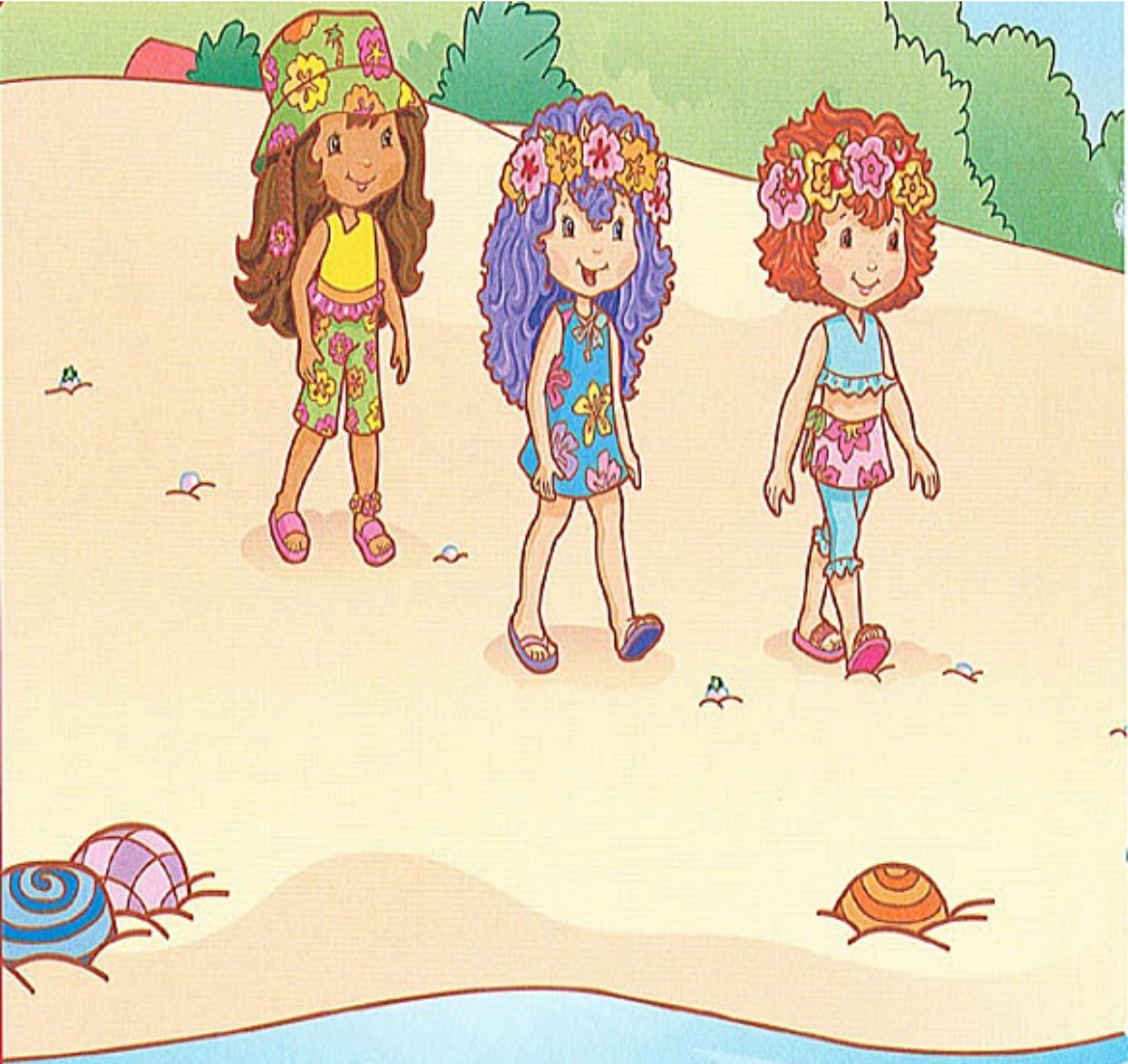
As the sun rose early the next morning, Papaya Parrot tried to crow like a rooster to wake the girls.





"Oh, no! We fell asleep!" cried Strawberry Shortcake.
"I only drifted off for a minute or two . . . or three . . .
or all night," admitted Coco.

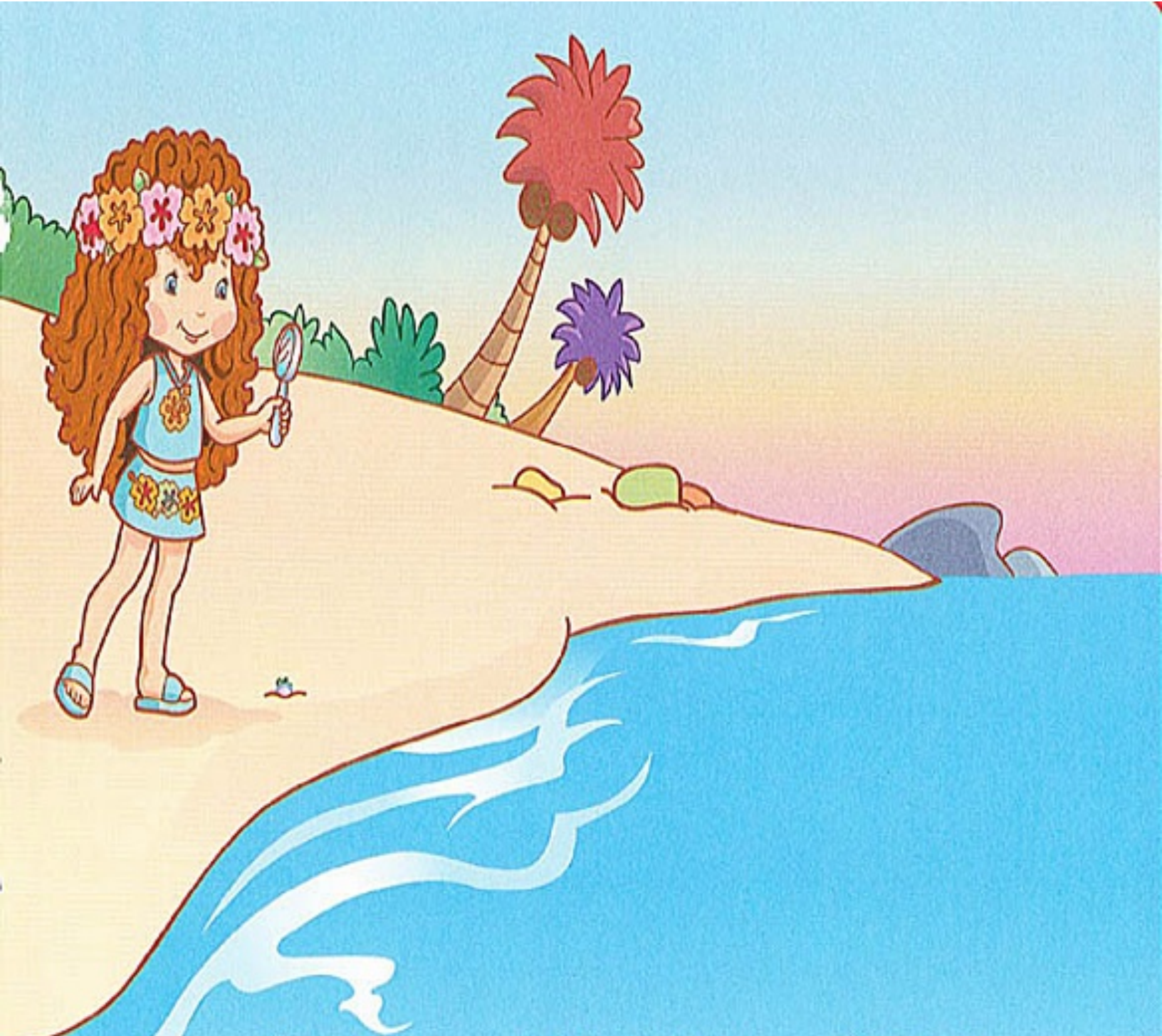
"Look!" said Rainbow Sherbet as she pointed to the beach.
"They're gone! The seaberries are gone!" Strawberry exclaimed.



"Look!" called Blueberry Muffin as she picked up her magnifying glass. "There's a trail of seaberries leading down the beach. Follow me!"

The seaberry trail led the four friends under Coco's tropical house, around trees, and in between rocks before it finally ended right at the water's edge.

"Well, blow me over and bowl me down!" cried Rainbow Sherbet.



"This thief is a sea-thief!" added Blueberry Muffin. "And with a trail like this, it's almost like he–she–*it* wants to be caught. Maybe it really is a sea beast!"

"Oh, I'll never be able to make any more seaberry treats!" sniffled Coco Calypso as she began to cry. "And no one will ever come visit me again, not with some scary sea creature living in my lagoon. It's been so lonely here . . . and now it's going to get even lonelier."

"Don't cry, Coco—we'll solve this mystery! Let's take my boat out in the lagoon and look around," suggested Rainbow.

"Great idea!" Strawberry Shortcake said.

As Rainbow Sherbet piloted her boat out to sea, the girls searched for any sign of the sea beast.

"I don't see anything," admitted Blueberry.

"Nothing except those dark clouds on the horizon," Rainbow Sherbet said. "Could be a storm coming."

"We have to be careful. The weather changes berry fast around here," added Coco Calypso. "Check it out! Seaberries! Let's bring some back with us."

While Blueberry and Strawberry lowered the net, Rainbow and Coco secured the anchor. Soon the friends were filling basket after basket with bright, shiny seaberries.

A sudden gust of wind blew a wave aboard as a dark shadow moved over the boat.

"That storm is closer than I thought. We've got to get back to shore," warned Rainbow Sherbet. "Help me raise the anchor! Hurry!"

"Uh-oh—I think it's stuck," Strawberry Shortcake said.

"We have to pull together! Let's heave! And ho! Heave! And ho!" called Rainbow Sherbet.

The friends tugged at the anchor with all of their might, but it didn't budge.

"It's no use—the anchor is stuck!" Rainbow Sherbet yelled. "I don't know how much more my boat can take!" As the choppy sea began to rock the boat, the friends held on tight.

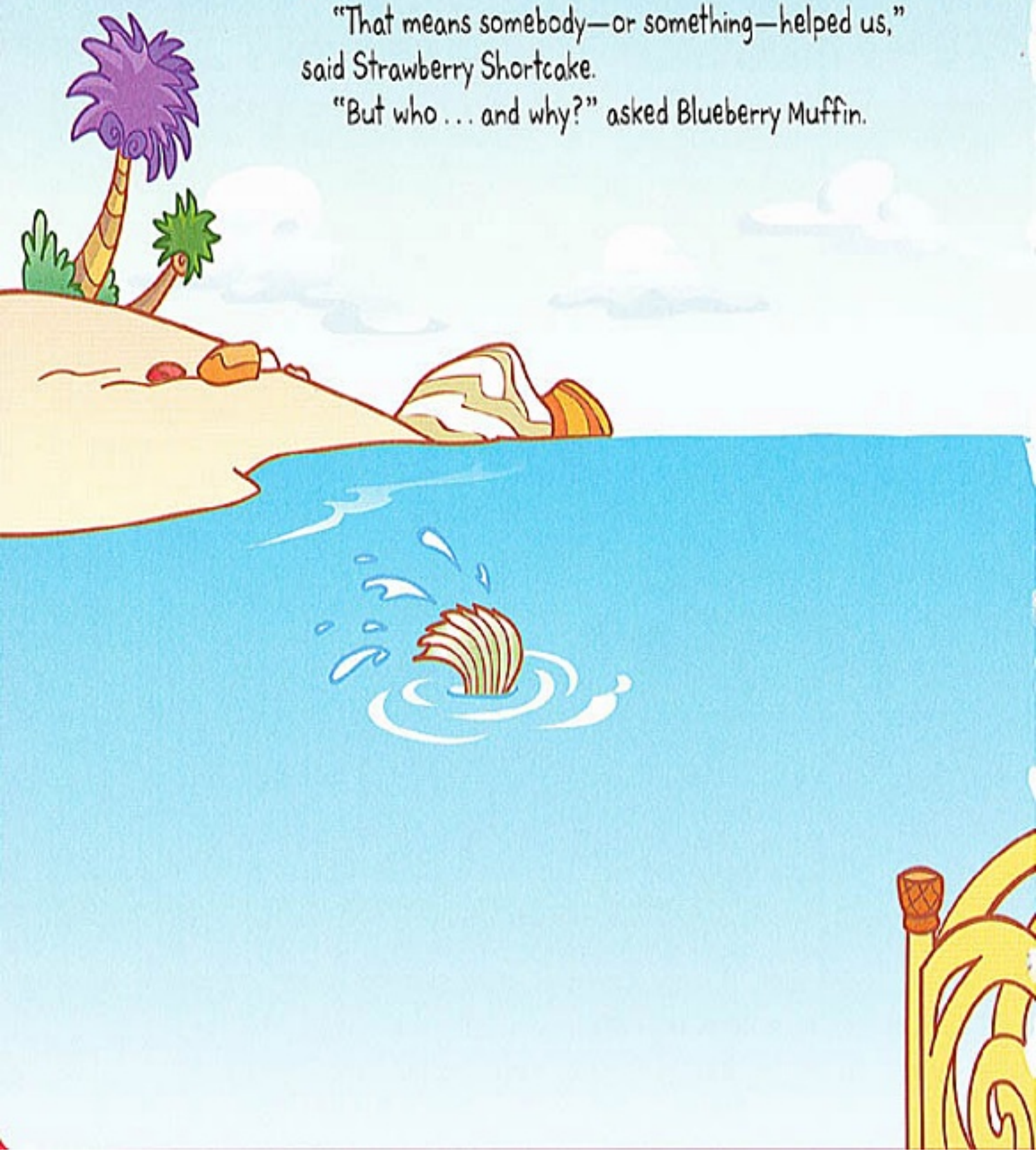
And then suddenly, with a snap, the boat started moving.

"What berry good luck!" exclaimed Strawberry Shortcake.

Rainbow Sherbet quickly pulled up the anchor line—but there was no anchor on it. "The rope's been cut!" she cried.

"That means somebody—or something—helped us," said Strawberry Shortcake.

"But who . . . and why?" asked Blueberry Muffin.

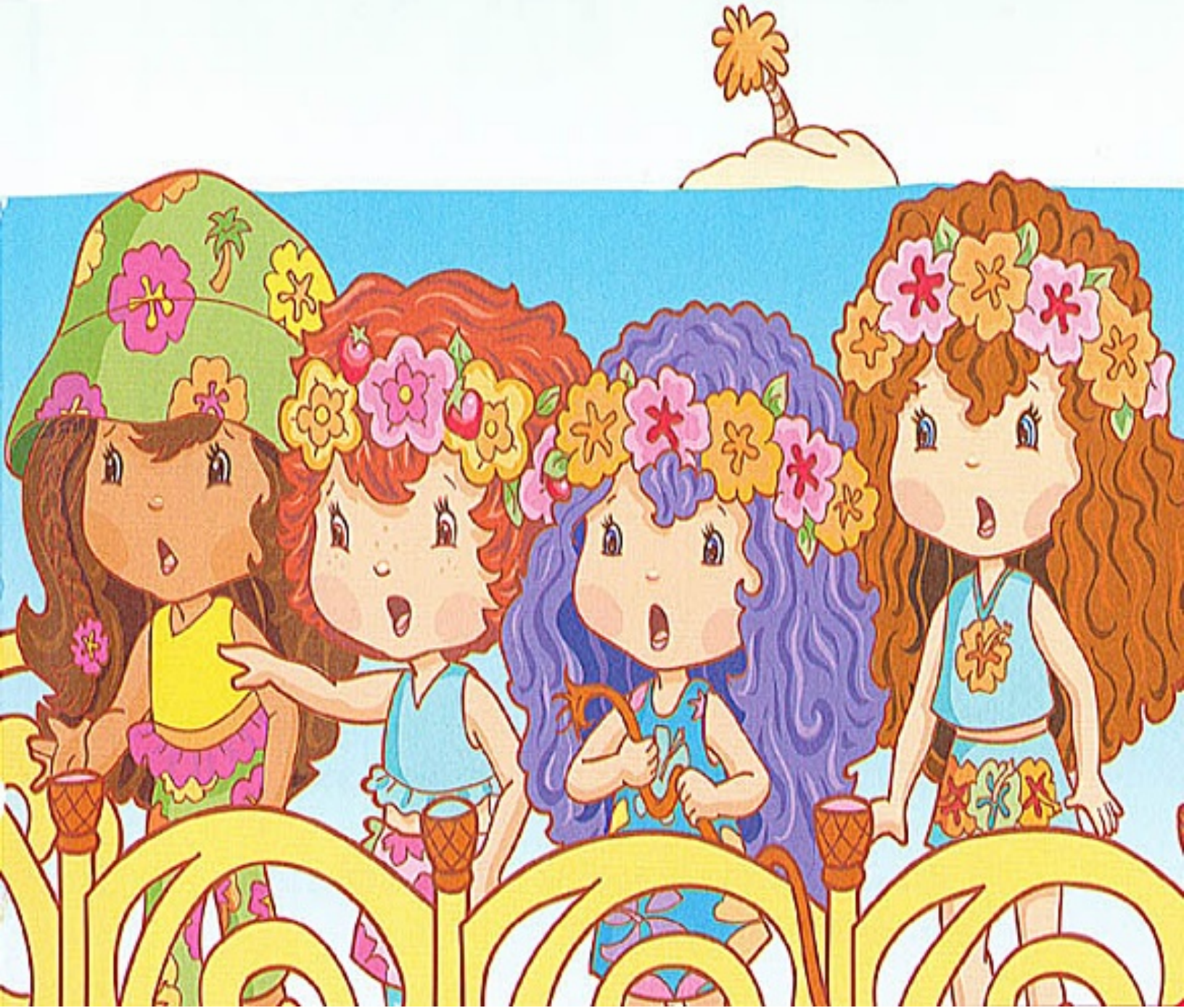


Out in the sea, a mermaid-like fin slipped into the water and disappeared.

"Look!" called Strawberry Shortcake. "Did you see that?"

"I think we all saw it," Blueberry Muffin said. "It must be the sea creature!"

"And I think we'd better get back to shore," added Rainbow Sherbet.



By the time they were back on the island, Strawberry Shortcake had come up with a plan to capture the sea creature.

"We can set a trap over here. When the thief tries to steal the seaberries, the net will pull it into the trees. The tin cans and coconuts will wake us up!"

The girls worked together to build the trap, then settled into their hiding place for the night.

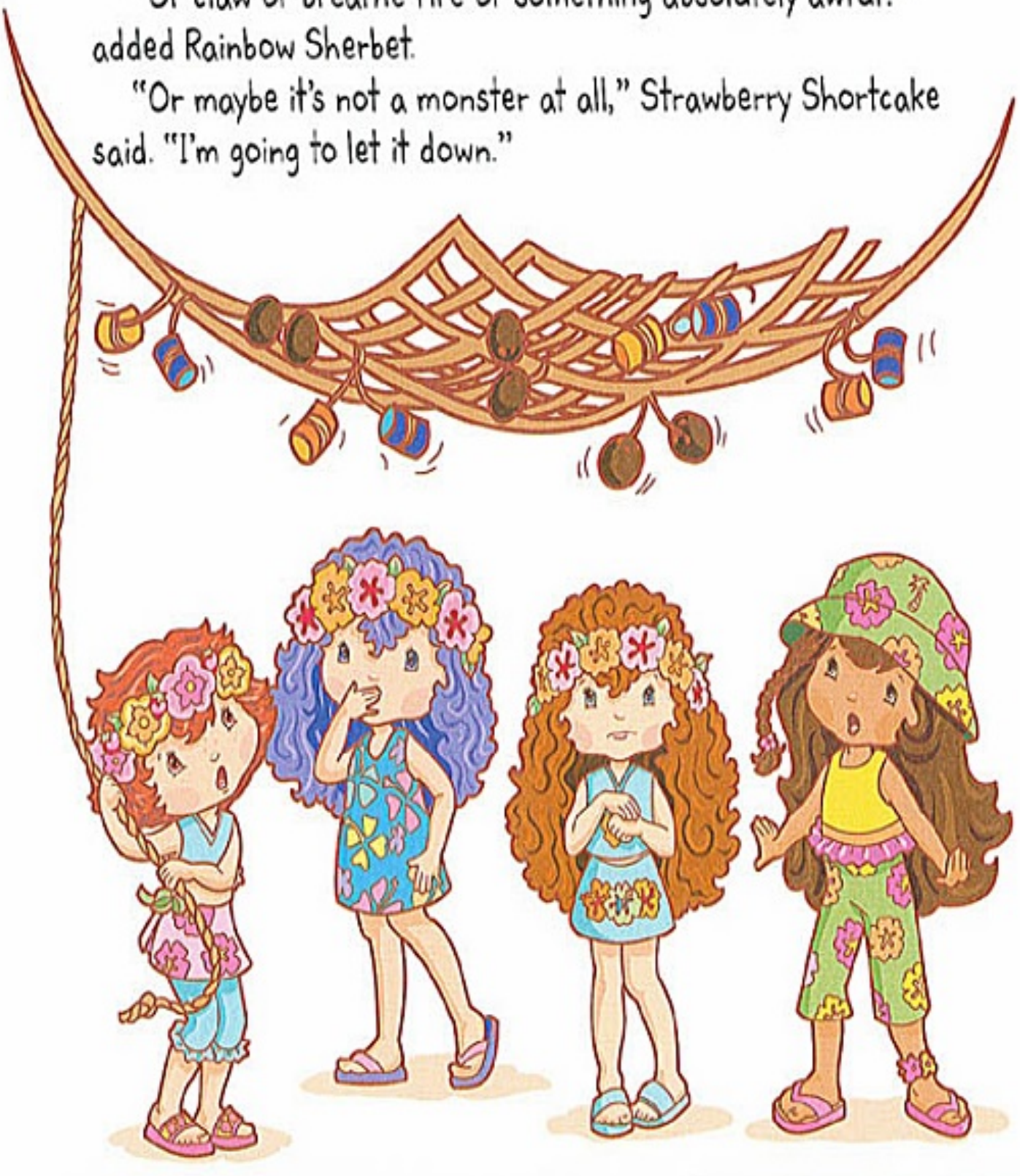
Early the next morning, a loud noise woke the girls. Someone—or something—was caught in the trap!

"Be careful, Strawberry," warned Coco Calypso. "It might be dangerous."

"It might even bite," said Blueberry Muffin.

"Or claw or breathe fire or something absolutely awful!" added Rainbow Sherbet.

"Or maybe it's not a monster at all," Strawberry Shortcake said. "I'm going to let it down."



"A mermaid!" gasped Coco Calypso.

"Where? Where?" asked the thief.

"You're not a mermaid! You're a girl!" said Strawberry. "I'm Strawberry Shortcake, and these are my friends, Rainbow Sherbet, Blueberry Muffin, and Coco Calypso."

"I'm Seaberry Delight. I live in the lagoon," said Seaberry Delight.

"How'd you get my anchor?" Rainbow Sherbet asked.

"I thought you might need it back," said Seaberry Delight.

"You mean you cut the rope?" asked Strawberry.

"You looked like you were in trouble when that big storm came in. So I dove into the water and cut your anchor free. I hope you don't mind," Seaberry Delight said.

"Mind? You saved our lives! We owe you a berry big thank-you!" Strawberry said.

"If you live in the lagoon, how come I've never seen you before?" asked Coco Calypso.

"I–I'm not very good at making new friends," Seaberry Delight said shyly. "I spend most of my day growing my seaberries and feeding them to the little fish in the lagoon. But when my seaberries began disappearing, I had to do something. My friends were hungry."

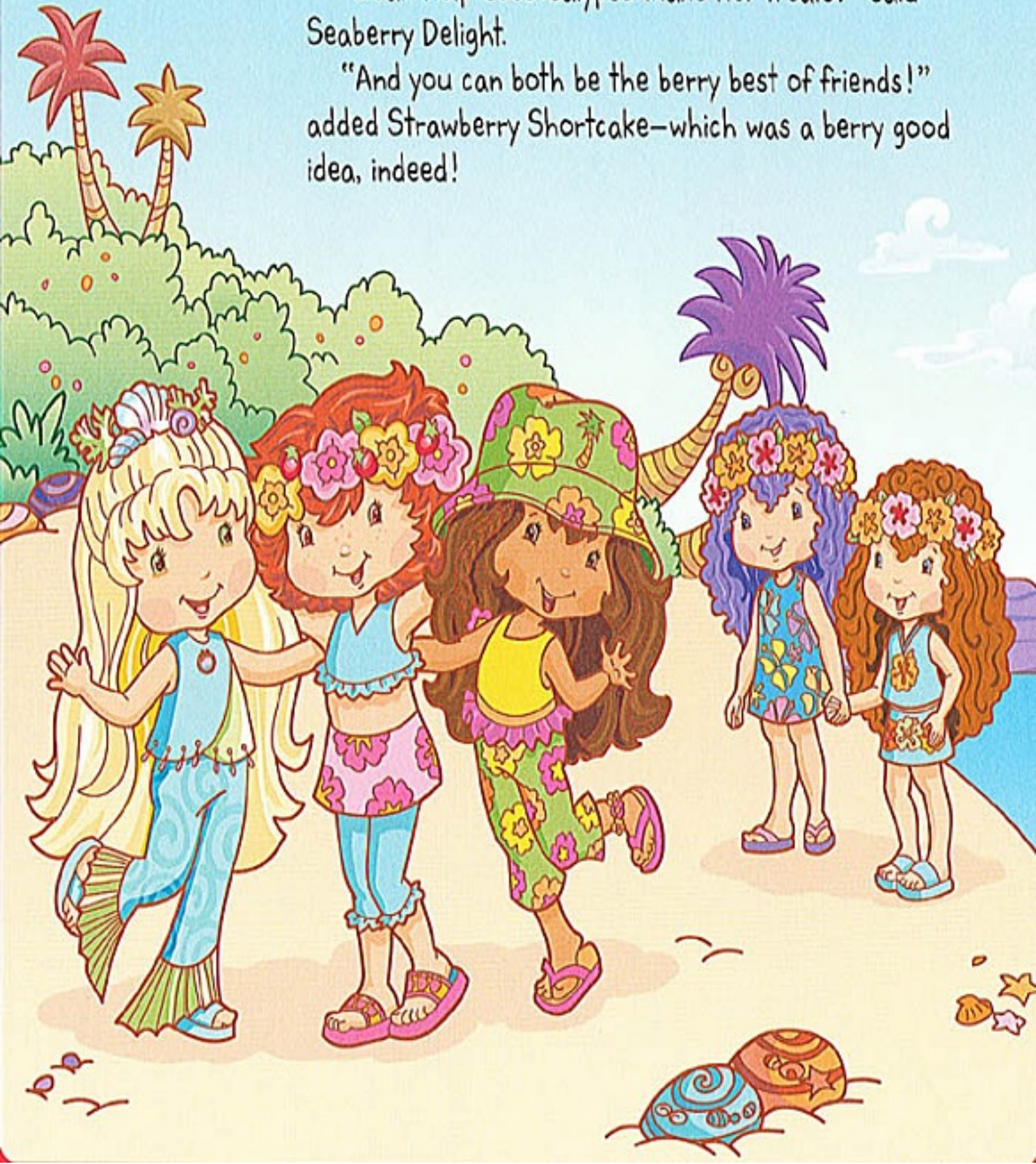
"Oh, no! I thought you were stealing the seaberries from me–but I was stealing them from you!" cried Coco Calypso. "I'm berry sorry!"

"I have an idea," said Strawberry Shortcake. "Maybe Seaberry Delight can share her seaberries with Coco—and Coco can share her treats with Seaberry Delight!"

"Sounds good to me," Coco Calypso said.

"I just know the little fish will love these berrylicious treats!" Seaberry Delight replied.

"I can help Seaberry Delight grow her seaberries," Coco Calypso said.

"*I* can help Coco Calypso make her treats!" said Seaberry Delight.

"And you can both be the berry best of friends!" added Strawberry Shortcake—which was a berry good idea, indeed!